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Profile

April 1982

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Marine Corps amtrac drivers
page 3

American fighting man

by 2nd Lt. Rick Miller

Editor's note: Lieutenant Miller, an aircraft maintenance officer with the 35th Component Repair Squadron, George AFB, Calif., placed first in the Freedoms Foundation essay contest.

He has to travel far before he can rest. Already, many miles have gone underfoot. The weather, the terrain have not been accommodating. They seldom have. He walks on.

His boots sink deeper into the mud with each step. His jungle fatigues are soiled and drenched in the steady downpour. The rain drops hit upon his helmet, ride around its rim then spill over in persistent streams onto his shoulders and back. He walks on.

He loses his footing. He slides and slips as he struggles with himself to find the energy to go on. He forces himself to take one step at a time. He stumbles up the muddy embankment. He sighs. His unshaven face itches. The blisters on his feet hurt. He is chilled and shivers uncontrollably. His body aches. He walks on.

Tripping, he lands on his M-16 rifle. He pauses momentarily to clean the mud caked in the weapon's flash suppressor. His stomach churns with hunger. His throat is dry. His canteens are empty. The burden of the countless pounds of equipment and provisions riding atop his back becomes heavier with each passing moment. With each step his weariness grows. The hills are steep. His feet are heavy. He fights the sleep from his eyes. He walks on.

He is an American fighting man. He doesn't have to be where he is. He knows that. He walks on. He walks on as others like him have done in the past. Somebody has to do it. Somebody has to care. He walks on, leaving behind Lexington and Yorktown. He's walked the long road from Gettysburg and Chancellorsville. He's left behind Belleau Woods and the Marne. He walks on, vividly remembering Tarawa and Iwo Jima. It's hard for him to forget Omaha Beach and Bastogne. He still thinks about Inchon and the frozen wastes of the Chosin Reservoir. Sadly, he's said a bittersweet goodby to Khe Sanh and Saigon. He walks on.

He walks on as always. He'd hold his head high if he knew someone was looking. He sacrifices a bit of his freedom this day that an entire nation will have its freedom preserved for tomorrow. There are better paying jobs, with fewer hassles, with fewer pains. But, there are few jobs as honorable, as noble. He is the keeper of freedom's lighthouse. He safeguards its beacon whose brilliance and resilience are unceasing and shine for all the world to see. He walks on.

He's done his share of complaining. He wouldn't be a GI if he didn't. At this moment, he does not think about what he is doing or why he is doing it. He's reached that certain stage; he's unquestioning. He knows the answers are close at hand if he ever wanted them.

Many of the friends with whom he walked are gone. He feels their absence. Freedom exacts a price. To an extent he can find a measure of solace in the words of his leaders. John Kennedy would say, "In your hands, my fellow citizen, more than in mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe."

Abraham Lincoln would add, "From our honored dead we must take increased devotion and highly resolve that our dead shall not have died in vain, that our nation, under God, shall be secure in its freedom and that our government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

He is an American service man. He must travel far before he can rest. There are new troubles to be dealt with on the horizon. His is a sacred mission. He is armed and ready, a willing crusader for the causes of liberty and justice. With him and those like him, the world's "last, best hope" will remain the progressive and free nation it is its heritage to be. He walks on.

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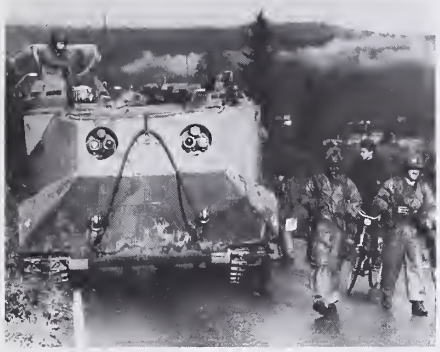
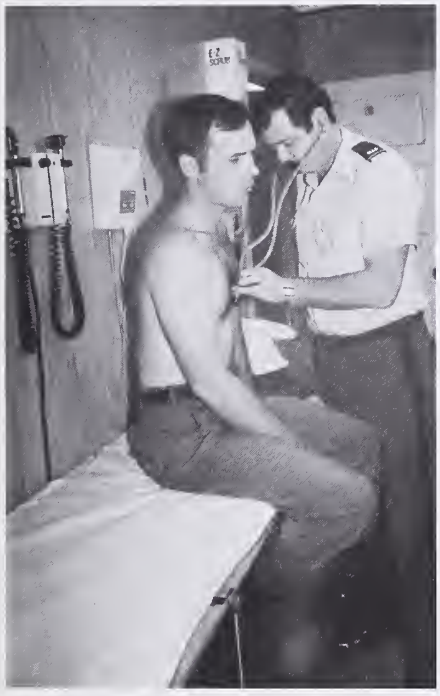


Page 4 - Marine Corps amtrac drivers take the iron dinosaur to all parts of the world.



Page 8 - The Army's physician's assistant career field demands the most from the person.

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Front cover: The first wave of amphibious landing vehicles hits the beach in Australia during a joint-combined exercise of the U.S. 7th Fleet Marines, Australia and New Zealand. (Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Bob Weisslodox)

Back Cover: Instructors at the Naval Regional Medical Center, Portsmouth, Va., set up instruments for a mock operating room used to instruct students in proper operating room procedures. (Photo by Sgt. Deborah Evans)

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The Iron Dinosaur

Story and photos by
Cpl. Chris Hawthorne

Called an amtrac, an assault amphibian vehicle, or an amphibious tractor, the LVT (landing vehicle tracked), resembling an iron dinosaur, has as many uses and abilities as it has names. All combat-trained Marines are intimately familiar with the amtrac, since it is the Corps' multi-purpose combat vehicle.

The original LVT is said to have been developed in the cypress swamps of Florida as a means of getting mail service through the swamps. The story goes that prior to World War II the Marine Corps was looking for a replacement for the long boats they used for amphibious landings. They sent a representative to buy the rights to the LVT.

To show his patriotism, the inventor agreed to sell, and the Marine representative is said to have paid $1 for the rights to manufacture the tracked vehicles. The Marine Corps did not reimburse the officer that dollar and he jokingly still claims to own the rights to all LVTs.

Since that time, the LVT has been through several changes and today's model, the LVTP-7, is one of the most versatile vehicles the Marine Corps employs. "It's a multi-purpose vehicle," said Lance Cpl. Damon James, a crew chief of an LVTP-7 at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Primarily used as a troop carrier in amphibious operations, the LVT

An amtrac moves down a wooded trail at Camp Lejeune during mechanized/anti-mechanized training.

The Marine Corps Amtrac

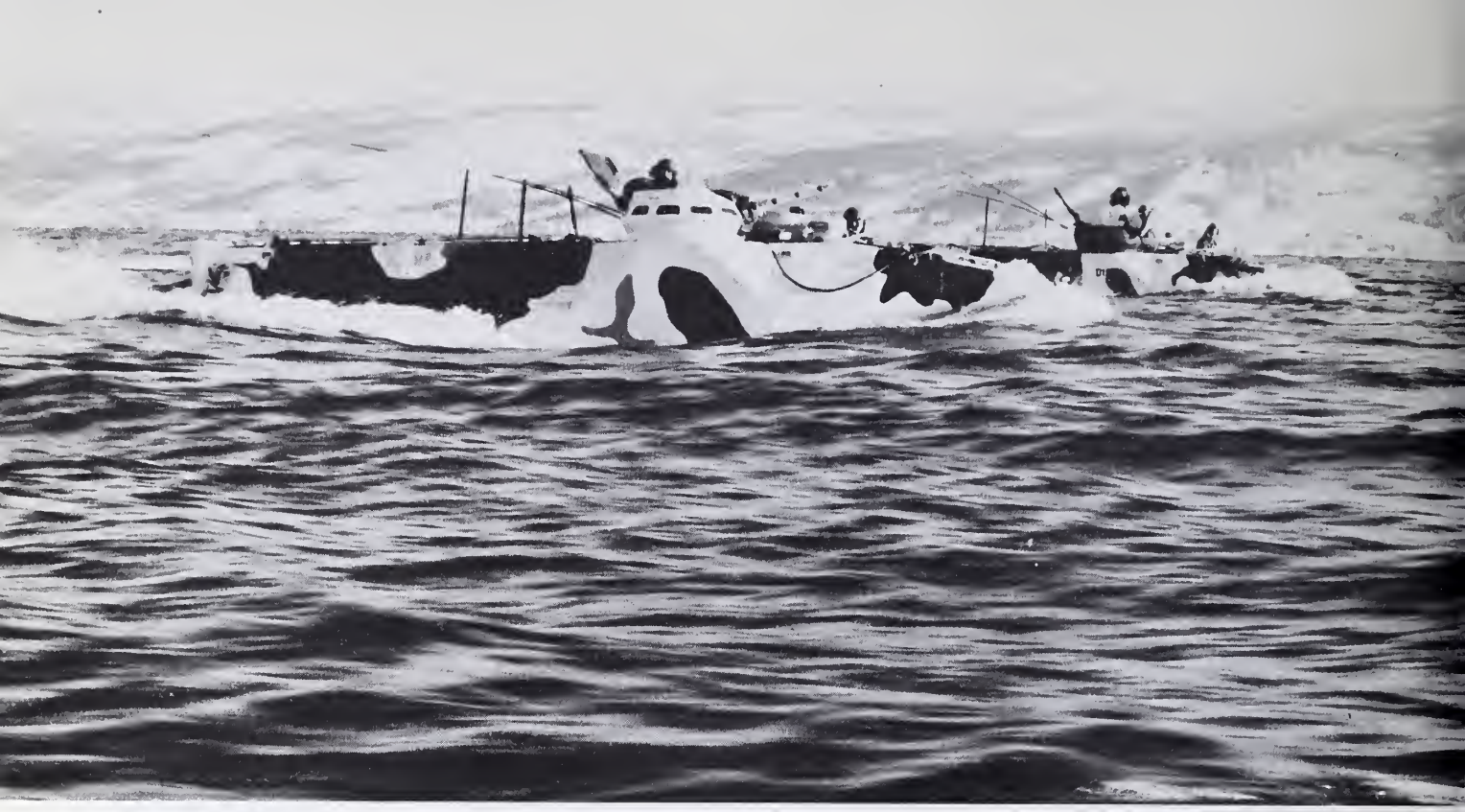
can reach speeds of eight miles per hour in the water and travel 1½ to two miles from ship to shore. It has been tested to withstand 12 feet of pounding surf.

"It's a crazy experience to drive the amtrac in the water," James said. "The water comes up to five to six feet on the side of the tractor and it looks like a big turtle. It amazes me that 26 tons of vehicle can float." To stay afloat, the vehicle is practically water tight. If any water should leak in, a hydraulic bilge pump can extract 110 gallons of water per minute and a back-up electric pump can remove 100 gallons per minute.

Once through the surf and back on land, the LVT can go almost anywhere. "The amtrac can negotiate a hill with a 60 degree incline span, an eight foot ditch or pivot 180 degrees," bragged Lance Cpl. James. "It can go 30 to 40 miles per hour with four forward and two reverse speeds."

In the 20 months James has been in the Marine Corps, he has worked with amtracs, except while in recruit training. In that time, he has found the LVT to be a sturdy vehicle, which is not hard to maintain. "It is easy to maintain if we stay on top of the maintenance," the 24-year-old Marine explained. "We have to pay special attention to the 100-pound tracks,

LVTs support infantry Marines during jungle training operations on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico.



Two amtracs, containing Marine infantrymen, slice through the cold waters of Balls Fiord as they advance upon the shore for an amphibious assault during NATO exercise Cold Winter 81.

checking them carefully before each operation. It's hard, heavy work because these are big vehicles and everything on them is heavy."

Before each operation, James and his crew check systems such as suspension, communication equipment, the machine gun in the armament station and the jet propulsion system for water driving. All must be in good order. Then the three-man crew has the tractor ready for their next mission.

Since the LVT can do many things, missions vary greatly. "We support the artillery by carrying their ammunition," Lance Cpl. James said. "Or, we could transport food for troops, since the LVT can carry 10,000 pounds of cargo. If we are operating alone, we can carry everything we need inside the amtrac. We don't need a tent. We have our own 'traveling motel' when we go to the field."

Usually the LVT crew will support the infantry since the tractor can hold 25 combat-equipped Marines. "We learn a lot working with the 'grunts,'" James stated. "They teach us the way

A Marine-laden amtrac passes before the bow of the USS Austin on its way to a Norwegian beach during Cold Winter 81.

they operate and how to support them with the .50-caliber machine gun mounted on the LVT turret."

James said he enjoys his job and considers it a challenge. "Working as an LVT crew chief is interesting. It's something not a lot of people have done."

He recalls one morning while on operations in Norway. "It was very cold and everyone was freezing so we were moving through the water as quickly as possible. Water was coming over the top of the tractor and soaking everything, but my crewman was keeping control of the troops, assuring them that a few leaks are normal, nothing to worry about.

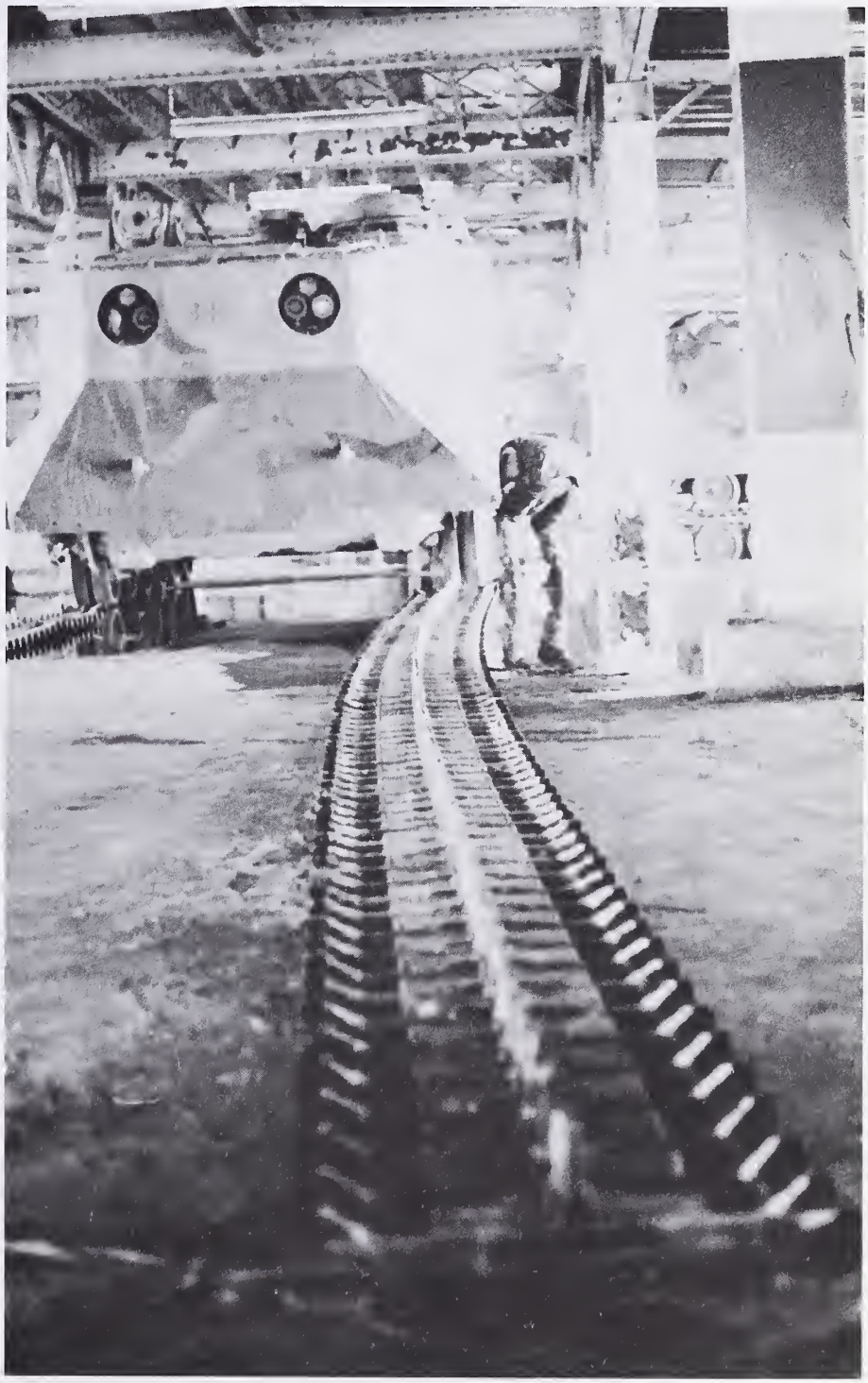
"Once we made it to the shoreline, the snow went from an inch deep to neck deep. We had to keep ramming the snow until we reached the road 75 meters inland," James continued. "Everyone was having a hard time adjusting to driving in the snow."

By the time the Norway operation was over, the amtrac drivers had learned to maneuver their huge tracked vehicles on the icy roads. James explained that the hardest thing to contend with was the Norwegians in their small cars, speeding expertly along the icy curves and not really looking out for the amtracs at all.

"They didn't seem to realize that we didn't have good control of the tracks on the ice," he said. "It was scary to be driving on a narrow road with a drop-off on the edge. This thing would run right over the guard rail and tumble over the edge if we lost control." Despite the ice, James and the other amtrac operators made it through Norway without any wrecks.

Aside from frozen adventures in the Arctic, James' career in amtracs has taken him racing through the woods and beaches of Camp Lejeune. "We recently went through nuclear, biological and chemical warfare training. We had to wear our gas masks and act like it was really wartime, giving nuclear, biological and chemical reports and functioning in the gas masks. It was hard to do in the heat, but if we do go to war, we'll encounter gasses and chemical agents and have to use the masks."

Lance Cpl. James is only one of many dedicated amtrac operators who train day in, day out for a mission they hope will never arise—war. But, if the United States must go into armed conflict, her citizens can be assured of the high quality of men and machines that will be sent. The amtrac is a top notch fighting vehicle that will carry and protect its cargo, whether it is men or material.



A Marine from the 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion does routine maintenance to an amtrac while its giant tracks await adjustments.

Army physician's assistants are highly trained practitioners

Nearly 10 years after the first Army Physician's Assistant (PA) program was established, becoming a PA is still limited to the elite of the enlisted medical personnel. This is due to the rigid requirements for acceptance into the program, limited positions open and the strict course of study.

The original PA program began at the Academy of Health Sciences, Ft. Sam Houston, Texas, in February 1972. Under this program, about 400 PAs were to be trained. More than 400 were actually graduated and because the Army's requirement for PAs was filled, the program expired.

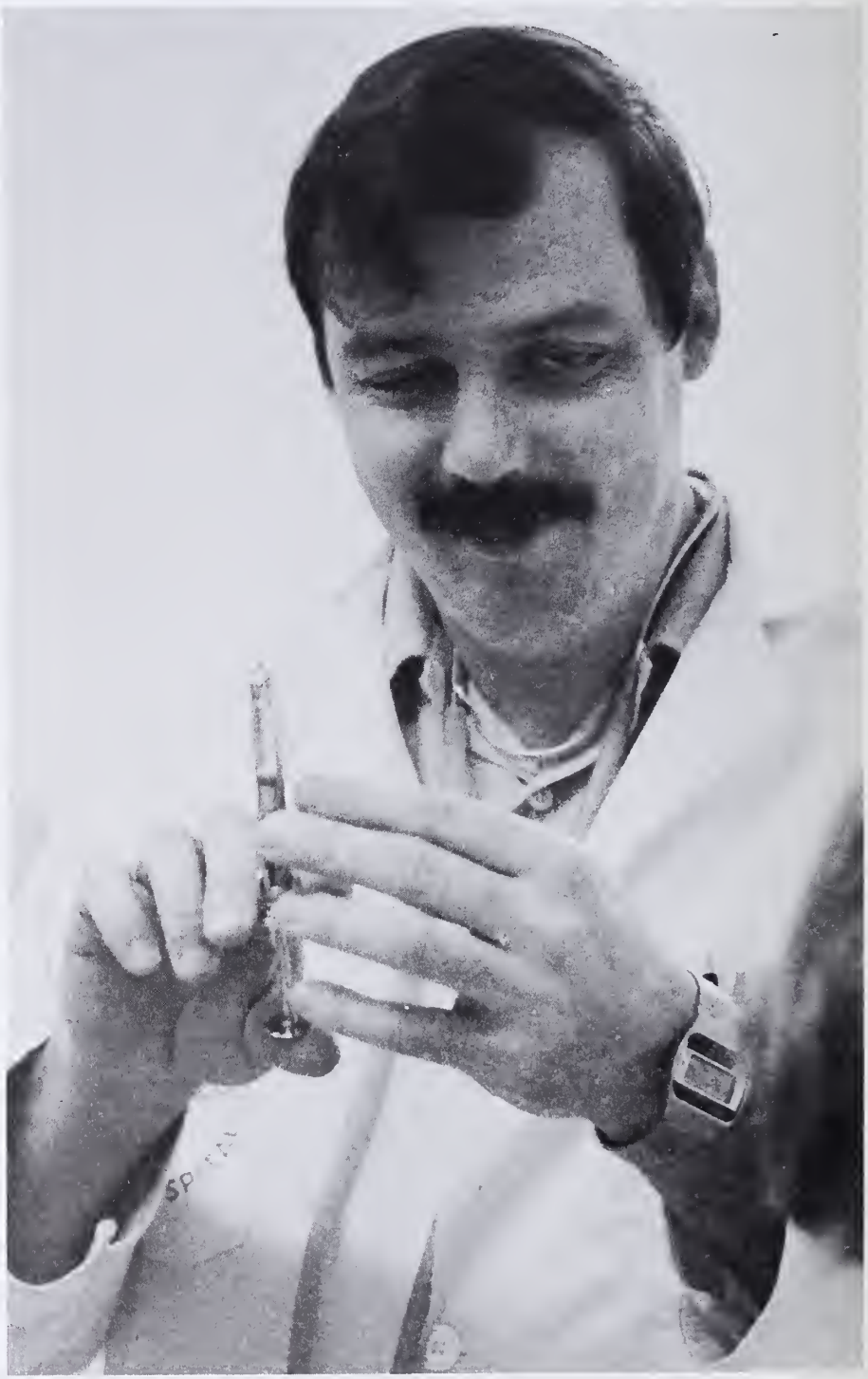
Over the years, as replacements became needed for some of the original graduates, the Army accepted nearly 50 civilian PAs and about 30 enlisted personnel obtained their training at Sheppard Air Force Base, Tex. under a program similar to the first.

The original program was reestablished at Ft. Sam Houston with classes beginning September 4, 1979. Classes are still taught there today.

The PA program is not one that new enlistees can enter upon completion of basic training. It is, instead, a goal for young entrants interested in a medical occupational career to set for themselves.

Col. Duane Gerstenberger, Chief of the Physician's Assistant branch, Medicine and Surgery division at the academy explained that most of the students were clinical specialists as well as some x-ray, medical laboratory and respiratory specialists before entering the course.

Chief Warrant Officer Eugene



Chief Warrant Officer Eugene Geiger, PA at McDonald Army Hospital, Ft. Eustis, Va., prepares to administer an inoculation. (Photo by Tracy Tanner)

A. Geiger, a PA at McDonald Army Hospital, Ft. Eustis, Va., said, "I spent two years as a combat medic in Vietnam. After that I attended a clinical specialist course at Mattigan Army Hospital—a one year course. After working five to six years as a clinical specialist, I applied to the PA program. It just seemed like a natural advancement for my career."

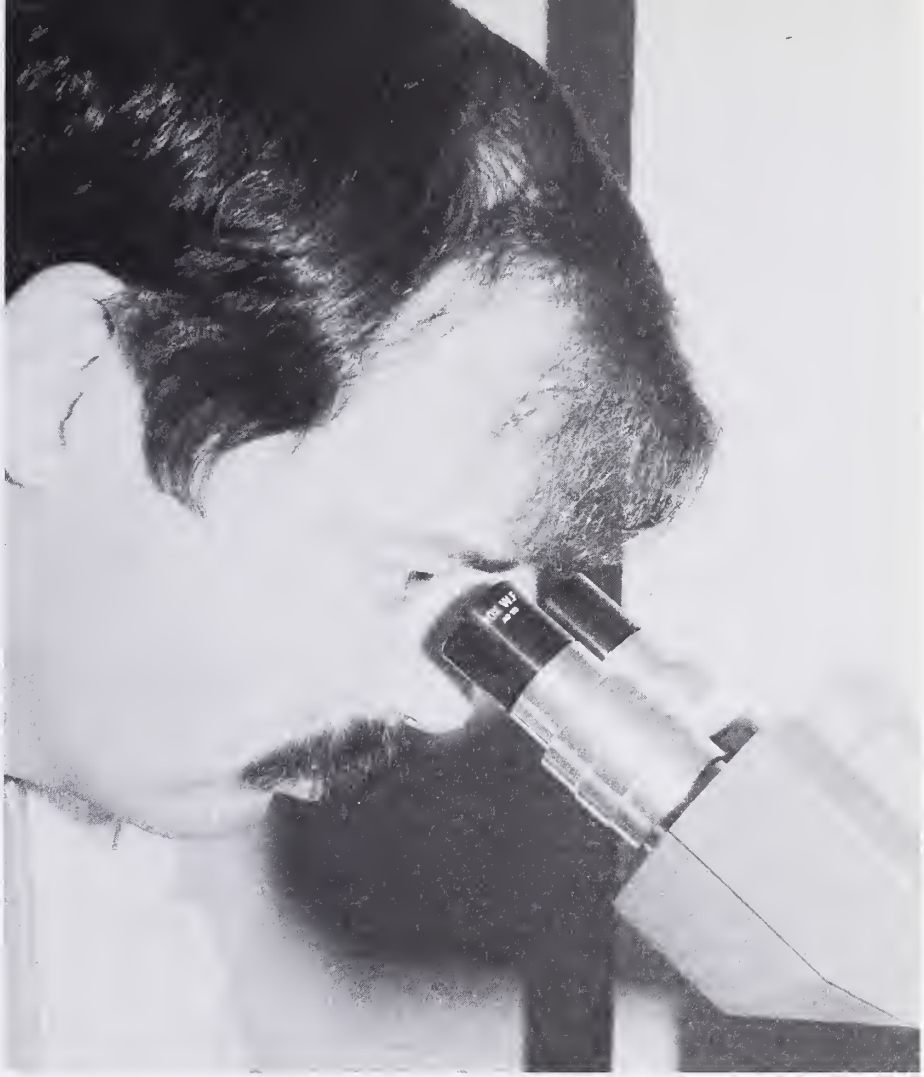
Gerstenberger noted that a composite of the personnel in the first three classes of the new program have an average of more than nine years of military service when entering the course. The average time in a medical military occupational skill (MOS) is more than eight years.

Without the medical knowledge obtained through the MOS training and reinforcement of actually working in the medical field, the Army veterans would find the battery of clinical proficiency tests given before acceptance to the program impossible.

Because of the limited positions available in the PA field and the large number of soldiers filling the medical specialty skills, PAs are still the elite of the Army medical MOSs. Gerstenberger said that there were more than 800 applicants for the first two classes in the current program. "Only 120 applicants could be accepted," he stressed. "For the last class, we had over 200 applicants, but could take only 60."

With all the experience present day PA Geiger had going for him upon applying for the course, he notes, "I applied in '75 for the PA school, kind of on a lark. There was a lot of competition, about 3000 applications for 120 slots," he recalls. "I was probably more surprised than anyone when I was accepted."

The PA course lasts a total of 21 months with nine months of didactic (classroom) training at the academy and one year of rotating internship. During the year in Army hospitals, the students rotate through 11 different wards and



Chief Warrant Officer Eugene Geiger examines a specimen through a microscope. (Photo by Tracy Tanner)

Warrant Officer James Rose treats an ingrown toenail in the Brooke Army Medical Center where he works as a PA. (Photo by LeRoy Leonard)

services, each rotation lasting from three to 10 weeks. "The course of study was very difficult for me," said Geiger. "You had to become pretty compulsive about the whole thing to get through. So many of the military courses are glossed over and you're coached on what you need to know. This course was taught in affiliation with Baylor University in Waco, Texas. In fact, we received a degree from Baylor upon completion."

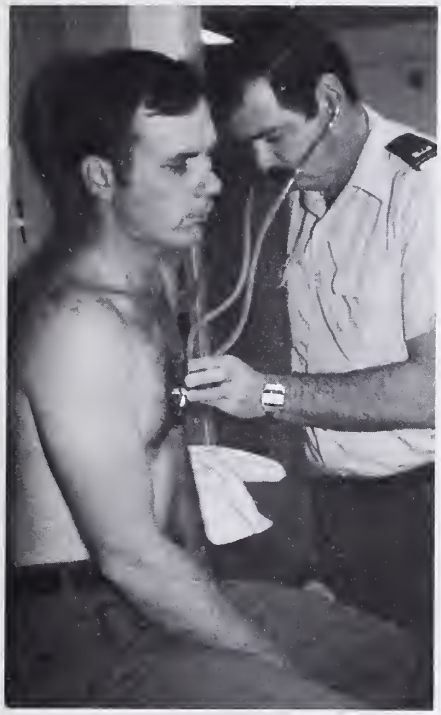
Under today's program, which has been shortened a bit from the original course that Geiger attended, graduates receive 87 semester hours of credit from Creighton University, Omaha, in affiliation with the academy. Graduates then need only 55 more hours to obtain a bacculaureate degree.

During Phase 1, the didactic training at the academy, the students are warrant officer candidates (WOC) and wear the WOC insignia instead of their enlisted grades. Upon completion of Phase I, they are conditionally appointed to warrant officer. If they do not graduate at the end of Phase II, they revert to their previous enlisted rank.

Upon graduation, the PAs have

Warrant Officer Terry Rinehardt supervises medical specialist John A. Uvalle as he treats patients. (Photo by LeRoy Leonard)

Warrant Officer Joan Senteny examines a patient in the Brooke Army Medical Center Pediatric Clinic. (Photo by LeRoy Leonard)



Physician's Assistant Eugene Geiger listens to a patient's heart while performing a routine physical examination. (Photo by Roger Allen)

the option of selecting a four or six year continued service obligation. Initial appointments are made at the WO1 level for those selecting a four year obligation and at the CWO2 level for those selecting a six year obligation.

One point that Geiger stressed was the misnomer of the name "physician's assistant." "In actuality, we do not assist anyone. We are pretty well accepted by the rest of the medical profession."

Geiger recently received his certification by the National Commission on Certification of PAs. "You have to take a national test, it's both a written and a practical," said Geiger. "It's a three day test and assesses pretty much your general knowledge. Most of the Army's PAs are certified."

According to Geiger, Army PAs present strong competition for their civilian counterparts because of the experience they receive so early in training. "Civilian PAs usually work with a doctor, and are under closer scrutiny. Army PAs on the other hand, work more independently," he explained. But, that does not mean that Geiger's patients haven't received the care they deserve. "In over five years of practice," said Geiger, "only once have I had a patient ask to see a doctor rather than me."

To apply for the course, a person must be active duty enlisted in the Army, a high school graduate or have a G.E.D., GT score of 110, a U.S. citizen, have three years in a medical MOS and meet all the physical requirements for appointment to warrant officer.

The transition from the enlisted ranks to being a warrant officer and physician's assistant is not an easy one. The people who complete the program have earned the reputation and prestige that goes with being an Army physician's assistant.

Chief Warrant Officer Eugene Geiger views the interior of the eye through the use of an aphthalmoscope. (Photo by Tracy Tanner)

Coast Guard air search and rescue

Story and photos by Capt. Lee J. Hockman

A C-130 Hercules takes off on a training flight, as an HH-3F Pelican stands by for take off clearance.

They fly in the worst weather, under the most severe conditions. No matter that it is in the middle of the night, or that visibility is restricted, someone needs their help, so they fly. The flight crews at the Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City, N.C. can be counted on to come to the rescue.

The station at Elizabeth City, officially opened in 1940, was established as a separate command within the Fifth Coast Guard District in 1970. The air station is one of just five Coast Guard installations that operates long range C-130 aircraft and one of eight airfields that operates HH-3F helicopters in support of the Coast Guard's numerous and varied missions.

The principal mission of the personnel and aircraft at Elizabeth City is search and rescue. One C-130 and one helicopter, along with their crews, are maintained in a "ready" status 24 hours a day to respond to emergencies.

"Because the C-130s are not immediate response aircraft, they are on two hour standby," stated Lt.j.g. Tom Blisard, an HH-3F pilot. As a result, the crews do not have to remain on base at night. "The helicopter crews must remain on base because they can be airborne within 15 minutes when called."

The HH-3F "Pelican" is a twin engine amphibious helicopter that is used primarily for medium range search and rescue (SAR) missions. In addition, it performs a variety of other jobs, which include maintaining offshore aids to navigation and assisting in law enforcement missions. A sophisticated all-weather aircraft, the HH-3F normally operates at a speed of 140 miles per hour and has a range of about 700 miles. It has a hoist with a 600-pound capacity for lifting people or cargo; an external sling may be rigged to lift heavier loads. First aid kits, emergency radios, floating smoke markers and hoist baskets are carried as standard equipment to aid in rescue efforts. The aircraft also has a boat type hull which enables the pilot to set down on the water to pick up survivors.

The flight crew consists of a pilot, who acts as the aircraft commander, a co-pilot who doubles as the navigator, a radio operator and a flight mechanic/hoist operator. If necessary, the crew is supplemented by a hospital corpsman to assist sick or injured victims being taken to a medical facility.

The HC-130 "Hercules" is a four engine, fixed wing, long range search and cargo airplane that cruises at 350 miles per hour, but can fly slower to drop rescue equipment. It has an endurance of eight hours for search operations. Standard equipment includes air droppable dewatering pumps and

A helicopter picks up a hospital corpsman who will aid in transporting a burn victim from a ship to a medical facility.

life rafts, though food, water, emergency radios, message blocks and first aid supplies can also be dropped.

"If a person needs a dewatering pump, we just lower the ramp and drop it out the back end on a parachute," said Lt. Robert Morrison, a C-130 pilot. "We try to drop it so that the trail line drapes across his hull. All he has to do is haul in the line and the pump comes in."

The flight crew of the C-130 normally consists of five members. The pilot, who is the aircraft commander, a co-pilot, a radio operator, a flight mechanic and a dropmaster.

"I like working on C-130s," stated Petty Officer 1st Class Gary Duncan, a dropmaster. "It's a safe, fast airplane. We get a variety of missions and go to a lot of different places, such as Newfoundland, California and Alaska."

As with the HH-3F helicopter, the C-130's prime mission is search and rescue. However, this versatile aircraft is the workhorse of the air station, performing many other functions. It is employed resupplying remote Coast Guard stations, surveying the placement of aids to navigation and aiding in the enforcement of the Fisheries Conservation and Management Act by ensuring that foreign nations are not illegally fishing within 200 miles of our coastline.

Another mission undertaken by the C-130 is marine environmental protection, which consists of aerial patrols to combat oil pollution. A specially equipped aircraft that utilizes an integrated multisensor electronic system, called the Airborne Ocean Surveillance System, provides effective airborne ocean surveillance over a wide range of operating conditions. The only airplane of its kind in the Coast Guard, the system, by detecting the presence of oil, identifying the areas of high oil concentration and variations in oil spill thickness, aids in accelerating oil clean up activities. Another use of the system is to locate and observe icebergs.

The International Ice Patrol was established in 1914 two years after the luxury liner Titanic struck an iceberg and sank off Newfoundland. The ice patrol relies on regular flights by C-130 aircraft to study and observe ice conditions in the North Atlantic Ocean. The information is then disseminated to ships by the operations center located in New York City. It is a seasonal activity that is undertaken when ice threatens shipping lanes, usually during the months of February through July.

Perhaps the most publicized missions flown by Coast Guard aircraft involve assisting law enforcement agencies by looking for vessels carrying on illicit activity or suspected of violating U.S. laws These cases most often involve drug trafficking.

"We coordinate between the Fifth Coast Guard District headquarters in Portsmouth, Va. and the commander of the Coast Guard Atlantic Area in New York," said Lt. Morrison. "They find out through intelligence sources possible drug operations and advise us that in a certain location we've got a suspect vessel. They try to give us as complete a description as possible of the vessel. Then we go out and try to find them."

If the vessel is found,

An HH-3F is moved out of its hanger to prepare for take off. A ground crew stands by for engine start up in case of malfunction.

A pilot demonstrates the HH-3F's boat-type hull. The helicopter's water landing capability makes it a valuable rescue aircraft.

headquarters is notified and, "We get a good check of his course and speed, a complete description, take photographs, and act as a communications relay for the boats (sent to intercept). After the flight we collect the navigation and radio logs and take statements from the pilots, navigators and radiomen. The data will be used as evidence in court if the vessel is seized."

The air station is tasked with many responsibilities, although according to Cmdr. Donald Hibbard, station operations officer, "We do what we can, but we do not interfere with our prime mission—search and rescue. That's what we do best. We find people who are in distress and assist people in distress."

Fifth District headquarters does the bulk of the coordination for search and rescue missions. When the situation calls for alerting a standby aircraft crew for a search and rescue case, the Rescue Coordination Center in Portsmouth maintains communications with all parties involved and passes on the available information to the responding aircraft. By knowing the nature of the problem and the conditions beforehand, the flight crew is able to make preparations enroute and respond more rapidly when they arrive on the scene.

In some instances the Coast Guard does not know where the person or vessel to be rescued is. When a boat is reported missing and if it has no signalling device, a search must be organized. Again, information is essential. The more information that is known, the better the estimate of the vessel's possible location, which increases the chance of a successful search.

"Boaters should always have some sort of signalling device," stated Cmdr. Hibbard. "Boater education is important. The Coast Guard Auxiliary teaches classes on safe boating and that has benefited the Coast Guard."

"We go out on a lot of ELTs," said Lt. Morrison. "An ELT (emergency locator transmitter) is an electronic beacon. It emits an emergency distress signal. That's how we have located numerous sailing vessels put in jeopardy by weather. There was one last summer that rolled over three times and demasted. The ELT was still working. That's the only reason we found him."

In order to be able to perform the various maneuvers and func-

Equipment used in emergency situations, such as a basket for use with the aircraft's hoist, is stored in the rear of the HH-3F.

tions called for in any circumstance, training is necessary. Crews must be able to work together under any type of weather condition; therefore, they practice in all kinds of weather.

"Training is an integral part of our overall flight hour system," stated Cmdr. Hibbard. "We would like to spend more time on training. We do a lot of varied missions. Even though you're good at something today, if you don't keep doing it you become haphazard. You develop a lackadaisical attitude. You have to keep your skills at a high level."

For this reason, pilots practice day and night take offs and landings. They perform precision approaches using instruments and radar. The C-130 crews rehearse air drops and search techniques. Helicopter crews practice maneuvering to approach a vessel at an altitude of 50 feet and hovering in place. They also work on the use of the hoist, landing in the water, picking up people in the water, as well as aircraft emergency procedures.

"If you're not flying them, you're fixing them," said Cmdr. Hibbard in talking about aircraft maintenance. "The people who man the airplanes are also the people who repair the airplanes."

Petty Officer 2nd Class John Skakle, a six-year veteran, likes Coast Guard aviation because "you work on what you fly." In addition to being a helicopter mechanic, he is part of the flight crew. He likes the urgency of his duties in the Coast Guard. "You've always got a permanent mission, not just training."

"The Coast Guard is good duty," stated Lt.j.g. Blisard, a former Army aviator. "I enjoy the mission thoroughly. In the Coast Guard you train for lifesaving and search and rescue, then you go out and you do it. The gratification is there, knowing that you save lives."

That is what the Coast Guard is all about.

Helicopter flight mechanic Petty Officer 2nd Class John Skakle replaces a hydraulic valve on his HH-3F Pelican.

Following the day's last mission, C-130 crewmembers perform routine maintenance to prepare the aircraft for a morning flight.

Air Force security police

The briefing room at the U.S. Air Force Security Police Academy at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, is filled with the murmuring of individual conversation as 150 airmen discuss their future training and positions as Security or Law Enforcement Specialists.

Most of the class is fresh out of basic military training at Lackland. Their average age is just over 18 years.

Attitudes are high and their enthusiasm is evident. The volume of their voices rises as several of the young airmen talk about "Starsky and Hutch," "Hill Street Blues," "Dirty Harry" and other television and movie cops that have become stereotypes of American police.

All conversation stops abruptly as the sergeant steps up to the microphone. "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, I'm Master Sgt. John Glass. I will be your training supervisor while you're in training." Master Sgt. Glass speaks in a crisp and precise manner. He immediately captivates the students' interest as he talks of their training.

For the security specialist,

Photos by Bob Welch
and Bill Boardman

training is completed within 32 days. Eight days for classroom instruction, 16 days of hands-on practical training and eight days in the field at nearby Camp Bullis, an Army installation used for actual security exercises and tactical movements.

The law enforcement trainee attends classroom instruction for 9½ days prior to 18½ days of hands-on practical training, with five days at Camp Bullis, for a total of 33 days of training.

The briefing continues as the wealth of information floods the ears and minds of the new airmen. Expressions slowly change as topics of 6 a.m. inspections, homework, classwork, long days, short nights and teamwork dominate the remainder of the briefing.

"As Security Police, our job is security of people, equipment and resources," Master Sgt. Glass continues. "But most of all it's service to people! You can perform your best by doing your best here. Good attitude with an open mind is your biggest asset. Take pride in yourself, your uniform, your appearance, and most of all your job. Security Police have a proud history that you will become a part of."

The briefing over, the airmen slowly file out of the auditorium. Their pride is evident, and the earlier youthful enthusiasm has been joined to feelings and expressions of awe. In the hallway, a group of young airmen stop to look at the 10-foot wall display, the "Creed of a Security Policeman."

I am a Security Policeman.

I hold allegiance to my country, devotion to duty and personal integrity above all.

I wear my badge of authority with dignity and restraint, and promote by example high standards of conduct, appearance, courtesy, and performance.

I seek no favor because of my position.

I perform my duties in a firm, courteous, and impartial manner, regardless of anyone's color, race, religion, national origin, or sex.

I strive to merit the respect of my fellow airmen and all with whom I come in contact.

The young men and women look at each other. Airman Gary McAnally smiles as he says to his friends, "I hope I made the right decision in wanting to be a cop. This training is going to be tough."

"That's okay," says Airman Andrew T. MacDonald, "I joined

During the final week of training at Camp Bullis, Texas, security specialists defend airfields against "enemy" attacks. Though all rounds fired are blank, the sound of bombs and artillery simulators, coupled with heavy smoke, gives a realistic effect.

Security Police Academy students (above) attending the law enforcement course at Lackland become experts in the use of speed measuring devices used in traffic control. Law enforcement trainees (below) at the Security Police Academy learn how to use numerous physical apprehension and restraint techniques during their training.

the Air Force to be a policeman. I like the idea of helping people. Sometimes we may have to put up with harassment or verbal abuse, but just knowing that I helped someone would make me feel good all day. I know I'll make it!"

The next morning the training starts. Security and law enforcement students divide into separate groups.

The law enforcement specialists must acquire skills quickly in the use of their primary weapon, the Smith and Wesson .38-caliber military revolver. After mastering safety and proper maintenance, the students practice at the range to qualify. Each student must score 300 out of a possible 400 points for qualification.

The technical and fundamental training starts with classroom instruction, but soon moves into the field for hands-on training. Traffic management is conducted on base with members of the base police unit giving the students a chance to see actual field work.

Search and seizure is conducted by instructors and the students. Each airman is taught the proper way to stop possible hostile individuals, search them and apply handcuffs. During field training the students are also using the alert codes and signals they have studied and practiced on portable and car radios.

Several hours of physical apprehension and restraint techniques and self defense are taught. Training involves disarming aggressors and rendering them helpless until help arrives. The students soon discover that there are no "Dirty Harrys" in the Air Force, but well-trained teams of experts.

The security specialists are equally busy in their training for a job that may some day include combat. Since Federal laws enacted by the Congress prohibit women from combat, no females are in this career field.

The first week of training is on

the firing range, where each man must qualify with the M-16 rifle, the primary weapon of the security specialist. The students become familiar with the weapon before firing for qualification scores. They also have training in the M-60 machine gun, with the actual firing conducted at Camp Bullis.

Training soon shifts to the classroom where students learn the tactics of base defense, convoy strategy, deployment and camouflage. Hands-on field training is conducted at the base, as students pull security patrol on aircraft in confined areas. In years gone by, each aircraft was guarded by a single security policeman—which was, to say the least, boring. Today, security is maintained by the security specialist with the support of sophisticated electronic surveillance equipment.

With the completion of the training in the classroom and field exercises, the security specialists deploy to Camp Bullis for the final week of training. At this point, the students practice the skills they have been taught. They enter into simulated situations of base security. All rounds fired in the mock battles are blanks, but the action appears real as deafening bombs and artillery simulators explode and heavy smoke fills the air. "Enemy attacks" are sporadic and occur without warning.

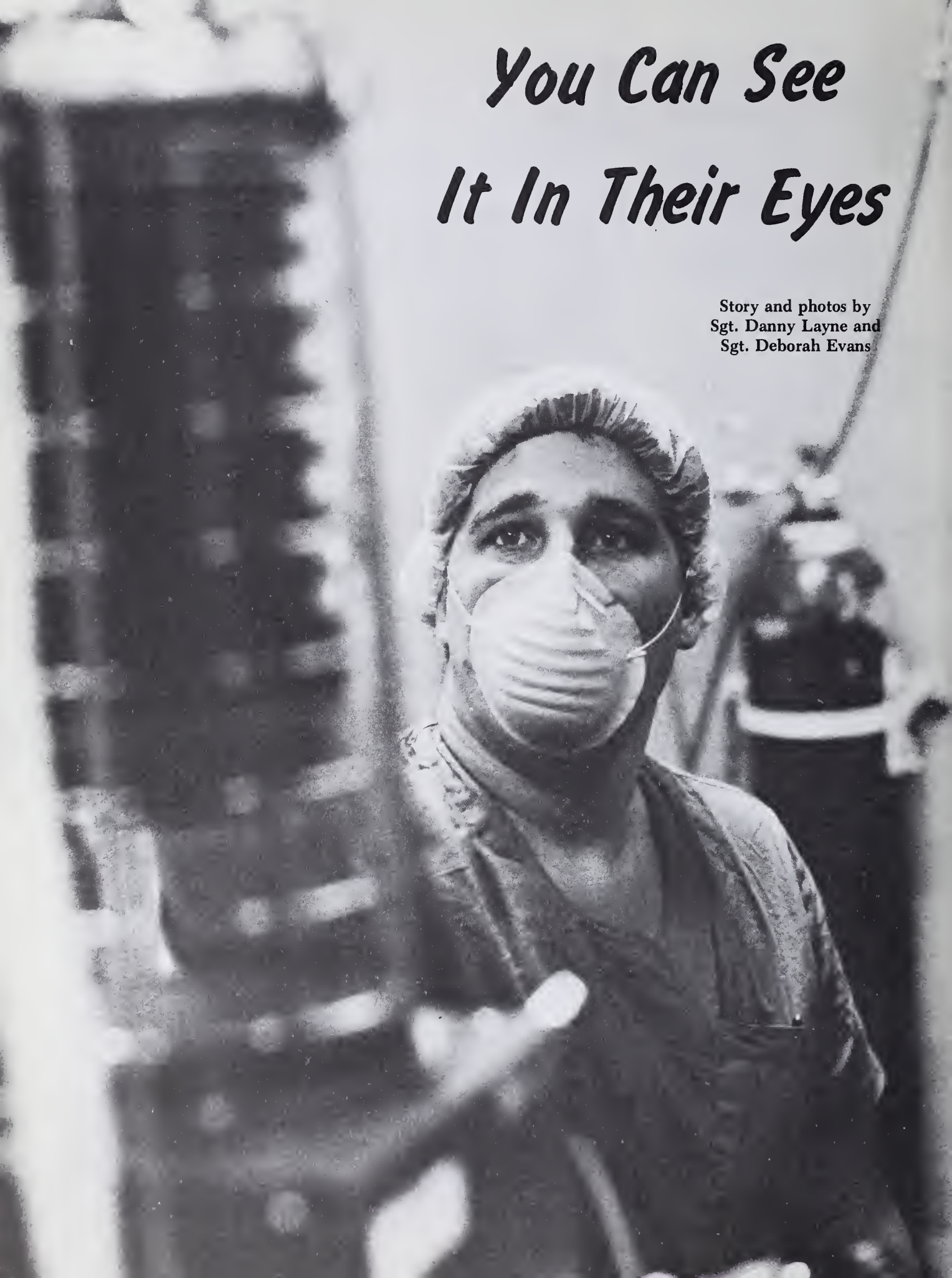
Security students use the current assault rifle, the M-16. While training at Camp Bullis, Texas, they become familiar with the M-208 grenade launcher, a weapon that gives an airman the fire power of the grenade launcher and the M-16.

Fire teams learn to depend on each other and teamwork. Esprit de corps soon becomes the driving factor. The Texas heat, rough terrain, biting bugs and an "enemy" that attacks anytime, soon tasks their minds and bodies. At noon, a patrol of 50 airmen gets the signal to break for lunch. The tired group hits the ground and welcomes the rest and C-rations. After eating, some rest while others talk about their assignments. Incoming mortar rounds and machine gun fire brings them all back to reality and they scramble for cover. An hour later the enemy is defeated, their graduation "exercise" is over. The senior instructors call all trainees together for an announcement. "Okay people, get your gear together, and clean your weapons. We move out in three hours. Next stop is Lackland and graduation." A cheer rises from the jubilant group. They scramble to break camp.

The next morning the new security and law enforcement specialists sit in graduation ceremonies while the academy commander, Col. Carl B. DeNisio, speaks to them. "You have completed a demanding course," Col. DeNisio tells the graduates. "You are now United States Air Force Security Police. No longer will you be judged only as an individual. You will be held to a higher standard. Everything you say and do will be scrutinized. Don't back away from that scrutiny, because it is proper. You represent law and justice. You are Security Police. Congratulations!"

You Can See It In Their Eyes

Story and photos by
Sgt. Danny Layne and
Sgt. Deborah Evans



While the frenzied world of the operating room continues, Petty Officer Jeb Baugn pauses in a corner long enough to check his charts.

It's hard to read emotions beneath green surgical masks. Is that a smile or frown? Can't tell—until you look into their eyes. That's where you see pain mirrored and these people deal with pain every day.

It is hard to distinguish one green-garbed figure from another whizzing through the hallways of this sterile world. The automatic door-opener's occasional hissing marks the passage of a groggy patient into the undecorated interior of the operating rooms. Another sibilant hiss and an unconscious patient is wheeled back into recovery. But the surgical teams stay. There's more pain on the way and it's their job to relieve it.

To most patients, it all looks so clean, so sterile. Glaring overhead lights accent a cold, unoccupied quality. Can anyone live in a place that clean?

Most patients say they aren't afraid. They've seen it all a thousand times before on TV and the patient always pulls through. But this is no soap opera and it's hard to trust your life to a masked stranger. In the final fading moments of consciousness, before the anesthetic takes over, they often peer with helpless wonder into the operating room technicians' unconcealed eyes.

The trust and responsibility given to OR techs (operating room technicians) is the result of a great deal of intense training. They receive training at either Bethesda, Md., Oakland, Calif., San Diego, Calif., or Portsmouth, Va.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Chris Bailey checks part of the operating room equipment during the cleaning and inspection portion of his work day.

The OR tech at the Naval School of Health and Sciences at Portsmouth, encounters an environment that is fast paced and very demanding. There is a great deal of technical expertise that must be mastered in only 26 weeks of classroom and practical experience. Upon graduation there is little room for error in the operating room. The life saving information received in classroom and hands-on experience is invaluable. Every detail is important.

During the didactic (classroom) phase of the course, students are introduced to surgical technology, environmental control and medico-legal aspects. As experience in the overall climate of the OR is understood, students receive instruction in the actual activities of the circulator (equipment and supply monitor) technicians and scrub technicians as well as orientation to surgical anesthesia and cardio pulmonary resusitation. Advanced surgical anatomy/operative procedures and experience in simulated learning labs are the last classes given before the students are introduced to actual OR situations.

Simulated learning labs are used to provide the student with an actual operating room environment including a plastic dummy patient. The instructors, acting as surgeons, make the same demands on the OR tech as if in an actual surgical situation. This phase of training comes just before the students go to the third floor of the Naval Regional Medical Hospital, to assist in actual operating rooms. The classroom environment and courses are designed to prepare the student to perform competently by the second phase, then the transition to actual situations will be a smooth one.

The second phase of training introduces the students to procedures for as many different types of surgery as possible. Each

During mock demonstrations, Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Vail acts as a doctor to ensure students get the feel and understand the procedures of an actual operating room situation.

type of surgery, such as neurology, gynecology and plastics, requires a different set-up of operating room instruments, machinery, and the use of different techniques. Each instrument and every piece of machinery must be memorized and the tech is required to know them on sight.

Unlike their counterparts in civilian hospitals, military OR techs are allowed certain mobility during actual surgery. They often move about the operating room performing a number of vital functions such as logging pertinent information, passing proper surgical instruments, monitoring life-support systems and insuring that anything needed will be available without fail. Operating room techs are on top of all procedures in the operating room from beginning to end. They prepare the patient for surgery and transport patients from their rooms to the OR. They also position and drape the patient. The responsibilities and pressures of the OR tech student and professional are endless.

After surgery the OR tech must replenish all supplies, then thoroughly clean and sterilize the entire room from ceiling to floor, including equipment and linen.

Classes are small to ensure individual instruction. Instructors spend a great deal of time with the students and are constantly evaluating the student on each specific duty; nothing is overlooked.

"Students are supervised and graded on performance during all phases of the schooling," stated Lt. Donald C. Rilling, a registered OR nurse and director of operating room technicians. He is also an instructor at the school. "Tests are given frequently and the results are available to the individual students to ensure they know, as well as the instructor, their weak and strong points. When we graduate an operating room technician we want little doubt that the individual is competent and capable of performing his or her duties."

At the Naval Regional Medical Center, Camp Lejeune, N.C. there are 19 qualified OR techs, all of whom have completed such training. Their smooth faces don't really reflect the frustrations, emotions and grueling hours that are the nature of their work. It's a high-priority, low-profile occupation.

"There are certainly more lucrative and less demanding professions in the world," Lt. Cmdr. James Trent, the OR's assistant supervisor said of the OR teams. "It takes a special kind of person to get the rewards and satisfaction from this job. The ones who enter this field expecting a pat on the back or constant recognition

The bottom of Petty Officer 2nd Class Chris Beck's shoe covers shows that his numerous trips through the hospital corridors could be measured in miles.

As a part of the future duties assigned to operating room technicians, students must learn proper procedure for sterilizing the operating rooms from floor to ceiling.

are in for a surprise. The satisfaction only comes from seeing the results in the patients."

Their's is a sterile world and on duty they seldom venture beyond the double-doors that separate surgery from the rest of the hospital. If they leave the OR, they must completely scrub and change into sterile clothing before returning. Most techs elect to spend their idle moments recuperating in the lounge.

The talk casually drifts from one extreme to another. Conversations range from friends and home to off-duty plans. Many discuss their desire for more medical training.

They share common complaints and constant pressures, but the good ones, the ones still around, have learned to deal with the job. That's what you can see in their eyes; that calm understanding and sympathy for the sufferers who come into and go out of their sterile world. There's healing in those eyes. Certainly not as much as in the skilled hands of the surgeon, but most patients don't see a doctor operate. They do see the OR techs' eyes, usually before and after surgery.

"We could not possibly function without the techs," said Navy Captain Elanor Miller, the OR coordinator. "There's just no way to measure their value. I've worked with them overseas in some extremely trying times and the one thing that always comes out is that they are serious about what they do."

You can see it in their eyes.

Beyond the window that separates the operating rooms from the scrub area, Petty Officer 2nd Class Dave Lewis intently assists during an operation.

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